

Science and Evolution

By Peter David Smith

22 August 2025

There was a news report on BBC radio today telling us all that a new species of dinosaur has been discovered on the Isle of Wight.

The news reader got the wrong end of the stick about how evolution works and it isn't the first time. BBC radio news readers are often saying things which reveal their lack of understanding of science.

A year or so ago a news presenter on the "Today" show spoke of astronomical views of "suns in the solar system". He had mistaken the phrase "solar system" for meaning "outer space" or "the galaxy" perhaps. It was the sort of mistake a person could only make if they had never understood "all that science sort of stuff".

The news reader who announced the new Isle of Wight dinosaur said that it had ridges down its back and that these ridges were perhaps for attracting a mate or intimidating an adversary. That's rubbish of course.

Dinosaurs don't grow ridges on their backs for a purpose. Evolution doesn't happen for purposes. Animals and plants don't develop physical characteristics for some pre-decided purpose. Humans and other animals don't develop a physical characteristic so that it can then help them to find a mate. That isn't how evolution works.

Here's how evolution actually works:

Evolution is driven by a combination of two forces, the force of random mutation and the force of natural selection.

Firstly, Random Mutation:

The DNA of plants and animals is vulnerable to environmental influences, especially to the radiation which makes it through the atmosphere. DNA is also affected by random degradation. These random effects from these various sources produce small changes in the DNA and these lead to slightly different characteristics in the organism.

I have to strongly emphasise here that the changes are RANDOM. They are not for any particular purpose. They just happen.

Secondly, Natural Selection:

The changes to the physical characteristics of the animal or plant will then fall into one of three categories: Positive, Negative or Neutral.

That means that the changes might turn out to be helpful to the organism's chances of survival or may be a hinderance to the chances of survival. Thirdly the changes might produce no particular advantage or disadvantage for the organism's survival.

The term "natural selection" refers to the fact that the characteristics which help a creature to survive will get passed on to the next generation more often than the ones which hinder survival. For the simple, natural, reason that the creature lives longer to pass on the survival characteristics or lives less long to pass on the anti-survival characteristics. The neutral characteristics, that is to say, the ones which have

no effect at all on the species' chances of survival, can be expected to get passed on approximately fifty percent of the time.

None of the mutations are ever for any specific reason. They are RANDOM.

They get passed on more often if the creature is alive to be able to pass the characteristics on to the next generation. But they are not planned in advance. That would require the presence of a god, or other controlling, planning, intelligent designing force in nature. There is no evidence to support the existence of any such planning agency or intelligent design.

That's why we have some neutral characteristics such as earlobes. They serve no purpose, they don't help our survival but they don't hinder our survival either. So these neutral characteristics have been passed on to succeeding generations.

Now, the next question is whether the BBC radio news is deliberately pursuing a creationist agenda with their talk of dinosaur ridges being there to "attract a mate" or whether that was a pure and simple mistake on the part of the BBC news department who lack any sort of science training or understanding.

Looking at the instance of the news reader who thought there were "suns" being observed "in the solar system", it seems more likely to be a case of simple ignorance rather than willful creationism.

All of my writing and photographs are under a Creative Commons copyright. The Devon Live clips belong to Devon Live.

[CC BY-NC-ND](#)



This license enables re-users to copy and distribute the material in any medium or format in unadapted form only, for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.

CC BY-NC-ND includes the following elements:

BY: credit must be given to the creator.

NC: Only noncommercial uses of the work are permitted.

ND: No derivatives or adaptations of the work are permitted.